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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0600  
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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN MEDIA MAKES RARE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF U.S.  
ASSISTANCE IN CULTURAL PRESERVATION

REF: Embassy Press Releases on 01/19/07

SUMMARY

1. (U) The presidential campaign in Turkmenistan overshadowed most other news in January. State media omitted coverage of a working visit by U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Evan A. Feigenbaum on January 10-14. However, pro-government website TURKMENISTAN.RU published an article on an Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation project, giving rare credit to the U.S. Government for its support. End Summary.

STATE MEDIA OMITTS FEIGENBAUM'S VISIT, AS EXPECTED

2. (U) DAS Feigenbaum's visit to Turkmenistan received no state media coverage. On January 19, newswires Associated Press (English) and Dow Jones International News (English) provided coverage on the visit based on the embassy's press release posted on January 19. (Note: The host government had requested a low profile for Feigenbaum's visit. End note.)

STATE MEDIA GIVES POSITIVE COVERAGE OF STATE DEPARTMENT FUNDED PROJECT

3. (U) Russia based pro-government website TURKMENISTAN.RU (English, Russian) published an article on January 23 about the completion of restoration activities at the Ak Saray Ding (White Palace Tower) monument in Dashoguz. The article described work completed by employees of the Institute of History under the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan, but also mentioned that the U.S. State Department financed the project with a grant from Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. The following day, news agency Times of Central Asia (English) reprinted the content of the article. On January 23, state dailies "Neytralniy Turkmenistan" (Russian, circ. 35,091) and "Turkmenistan" (Turkmen, circ. 28,091) published articles with similar content, emphasizing the State Department's contribution in the restoration in the lead paragraph. On January 25, state weekly "Watan" (Turkmen, circ. 26,091) reprinted the article from state dailies.

COMMENT

4. (U) State media often provides positive coverage of

post-sponsored cultural events and news, but is not consistent in crediting the U.S. Government for its contributions. The print coverage was followed in February by a television broadcast of the project activity, but the Miras Cultural Center (under the Ministry of Culture) cut out portions of the interview with the project manager where she credited the U.S. Government. When the project manager saw the coverage and realized it had been cut, she appealed to Miras, but they said they "could not" include it. (Note: Post believes Miras is simply afraid to stick its neck out by highlighting U.S. involvement in its activity, despite the fact that the Ministry of Culture has explicitly thanked post for its Ambassador's Fund support. End Note.) END COMMENT.

BRUSH

Drafted: IMA MHummedov

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